

## Chapter 1



# Something about Community

## Insanity and Community

It is perhaps a tired truism to say that we live in a time of urgent crisis. I don't know of any age, any historical period, about which that assertion could not be made;<sup>1</sup> but our age differs from all others in that at no previous time, not even after the introduction of the battle chariot, the long bow, the musket, or the machine gun, has life seemed so precariously balanced between existence and nonexistence, as it is in the twenty-first century: if nuclear violence doesn't obliterate our community, then environmental violence surely will.

### *Insanity*

What Erich Fromm, the twentieth-century psychoanalyst and critic of Western community, wrote nearly fifty years ago about community is even more poignantly true today. Our society, the whole of Western society, Fromm claimed, was sick, and that sickness was displayed in the intolerably high incidence of psychological depression, alcoholism, drug addiction, homicides, overpopulation, poverty, pollution, and war generated by and within our community. Taking war as an example, Fromm observed:

Let us, in good psychiatric fashion, look at the facts. In the last one hundred years we, in the Western world, have created a

greater material wealth than any other society in the history of the human race. Yet we have managed to kill off millions of our population in an arrangement which we call "war." Aside from smaller wars, we had larger ones in 1870, 1914 and 1939. During these wars, every participant firmly believed that he was fighting in his self-defense, for his honor, or that he was backed up by God.<sup>2</sup>

Fromm continued his 1955 work, which he titled *The Sane Society*, observing:

Happiness becomes identical with consumption of newer and better commodities, the drinking in of music, screen plays, fun, sex, liquor and cigarettes. Not having a sense of self except the one which conformity with the majority can give, he is insecure, anxious, depending on approval.<sup>3</sup>

The kind of person that we have managed to produce and that we take as the norm, as the best that we can produce, is a person "alienated from himself":

He is incapable to love and to use his reason, to make decisions, in fact incapable to appreciate life and thus ready and even willing to destroy everything. The world is again fragmentalized, has lost its unity; he is again worshipping diversified things, with the only exception that now they are man-made, rather than part of nature.<sup>4</sup>

Fromm concluded with the only possible diagnosis: Our society is insane:

This alienation and automatization leads to an ever-increasing insanity. Life has no meaning, there is no joy, no faith, no reality. Everybody is "happy"—except that he does not feel, does not reason, does not love.<sup>5</sup>

Several additional signs of insanity have recently emerged to capture the attention of those concerned about communal madness. These other forms of lamentable and preventable insanity are easily identified on six community levels: on the individual level, where insanity appears as "neuroses and suicide"; on the family level, as "domestic abuse and unemployment"; on the city level, as

"urban blight and indifference or neglect"; on the national level, as "disease and injustice"; on the international level, as "terrorism and war"; and, finally, on the ecological level, as "ecospheric degradation and environmental pollution." Each of these communities from the self to the ecosphere shares its madness with levels above and below itself and each represents an area where our communal problems of violence and peace have their origin. The insanity that begins at the individual level grows and spreads to ever wider populations until, for us, in the twenty-first century, it has threatened to devour every living thing on this planet together with the very planet itself.

If something is to be done then that something must begin at the level of community, that is, with the six communities just mentioned. Four philosophers who have had much to say about insanity and community, violence and peace, were Aldo Leopold, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Gautama the Buddha. Each gave us a vision of community and each provided a solution to the problems of violence and peace within community. Each speaks to our communal condition today. But before we turn to their views about violence and peace, it might be well to look very briefly at just what community is.

### *Community*

If all communities<sup>6</sup> share certain properties, properties that make them communities, then what applies necessarily to one community ought to apply to other communities. So we might well ask, first, What is a community?, second, How does one become a member of a community?, and, third, Can the problems of violence and peace in the twenty-first century be solved through the way of community? As to the first, let's assume at the outset, and very roughly and incompletely, that a community (from the Latin *communis*, "common") is a group, set or collection of two or more members who share something-or-other and that it's that sharing that defines them as a community. And let's also assume that the more obvious things that community members share, whether consciously or unconsciously, and in varying degrees or quantities, are a history of, and a loyalty to, their community, together with common properties, languages, feelings, expectations, purposes, respect, stability, integrity, love, or destiny. Thus not only would individuals, families, villages, cities, nations, and the ecosystem be candidates for community status, but so also might lynch mobs,

orchestras, the human body, autos, and cuckoo clocks. The key to what our concept of community is must lie in the nature of what is shared together with the sharing itself.

Second, one becomes a member of a community by participating in the sharing or in what is shared: one shares, voluntarily or involuntarily, consciously or unconsciously, in the community's purposes, goals and ends, that is, in its "happiness," and in virtue of that sharing one is said to be a member of that community. In the fourth century B.C.E. the Greek philosopher Aristotle began his *Politics* with these memorable lines, "Every community is established with a view to some good . . . every political community aims at good . . . at the highest good." That "highest good," for Aristotle, was "happiness." In our investigation we shall be employing Aristotle's notion of community and assume that the kind of community that we are seeking is one that is capable of generating the highest human good through some manner of sharing. This allows us to leave out of consideration as candidates for community mobs, autos, and clocks, as well as nefarious human economic, political, and social groups that are themselves obviously insane or inherently self-destructive (*pace* Erich Fromm).

A third question now looms: Can Leopold or Gandhi or King or the Buddha bring about happiness for our communities? That is, can the problems of violence and peace in the twenty-first century be solved through their ways of community? It is this third question, a question about happiness in communities, that will constitute the dominant question to be put throughout this study. This question can be answered by turning to a variant of a Socratic argument first used by Plato in the fourth century B.C.E. That Socratic argument, in turn, is best seen against the background of a community, Athens, caught up in over a century of external violence, its hard-won peace now threatened by internal violence from one of its own members.

### *Socrates and Community*

Socrates of Athens (469–399 B.C.E.) finds himself in the last year of his life brought up on charges by the city of Athens that could end that life. He is charged with endangering the peace, order and traditions of the community: "Socrates is guilty of corrupting the minds of the young and of believing in deities of his own invention instead of the gods of the community."<sup>8</sup>

*Traitors and their associates.* The three charges reflect the fears and suspicions of the Athenians of the time towards Socrates

largely because of his close friendship with two of the community's most notorious traitors. The first, Alcibiades, had been responsible, it was believed, for two anticomunal acts in 415 B.C.E. at the height of Athens's war against Sparta, the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.E.). These acts involved the profanation of the mysteries, a conspiracy to mock the gods of the community, and with it the mutilation of the hermes, the numerous votive statues dedicated to the god Hermes. But this impious attack on the religious foundation of the city was nothing compared to Alcibiades' other acts of treachery. He had been responsible for urging the Athenians to dispatch a large fleet and army against Syracuse, a Spartan ally in far-away Sicily. The venture was a disaster. The expedition was defeated in 413 B.C.E. and thousands of young Athenians were drowned or killed. Syracuse and Sparta triumphed and, back in Athens, everyone blamed Alcibiades. He fled Athens, sought refuge with the Spartans, and proceeded to advise them about their military tactics. Subsequently, he committed yet another treasonous act by joining with Athens's traditional and ancient enemy, the Persians: here was triple treason most foul. Alcibiades was closely identified in every Athenian's mind, once the war was lost, with his infamous mentor, teacher, and friend, Socrates.

The second traitor, Critias, had an even more nefarious anti-community reputation. Following the defeat of Athens by Sparta in 404 B.C.E. an oligarchical party of thirty pro-Spartans took over the rule of Athens and quickly instituted a reign of terror. The first order of oppression was to round up the more popular supporters of the defeated democracy and execute them. The ruthless rule of the Thirty Oligarchs led to the massacre of thousands of Athenians. And Critias, the pupil, friend, and associate of Socrates, was identified as the most bloodthirsty of all of the tyrants.

With the restoration of the democracy in 403 B.C.E., and despite a general amnesty, Athenians were in no mood to forgive those who had destroyed their community. Here was a chance to even the score with the equally notorious associate of Alcibiades and Critias, a man who, like them, had undermined the morality and religion, the peace, order and traditions, of the community.

Socrates was also identified with, and seemed to support and defend, another anticomunal tendency known to the Athenians, the cult of individualism. As seen by Plato, Socrates had discovered the *psychē*, the soul, that eternal, immortal, spiritual part of humans that stood, in a sense, separated and above the community. The soul defined a person more distinctively than the community:

one's soul pulled one away from the group, the community pulled one into it. It was, after all, Socrates, alone, who heard the voice of God, his *daimōn*, and, he, alone, who had a sacred mission from God to teach the citizens to discover and care for their individual *psychēs*. The unexamined life, as he tells the Athenian jury at his trial for blasphemy in 399 B.C.E, is not worth living and the examination of that life is directed, above all else, at one's own *psychē*:

Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one whom I met and saying to him after my manner: You, my friend,—a citizen of the great and mighty and wise community of Athens,—are you not ashamed of heaping up the greatest amount of money, and honor and reputation and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the *psychē* which you never regard or heed at all.

Following this opening, Socrates then moves into his defense against the charge that chiefly concerns us here, the charge that he has corrupted the youth of the community. At the same time he reveals himself as God's messenger sent by Apollo himself on a sacred mission:

For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties [concerns which, incidentally, hold the community together and which are now sorely threatened] but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the *psychē*. I tell you that goodness is not given by money, but that from goodness comes money and every other good of man, communal as well as individual. That is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, I am a mischievous person.<sup>9</sup>

In the eyes of the jury that teaching did, indeed, corrupt the youth as well as the community at large. After all, recall what the teaching of individualism and the care of the *psychē* had done to Alcibiades and Critias. Now it threatened the community once again: individualism had led to blasphemy, treason, defeat, and chaos, and Socrates was responsible. Therefore, Socrates deserved death.

Plato has raised a problem that will be with us throughout this book, "the dilemma of the individual and the community": If the individual is too strong, if private rights and personal interest supersede community benefits, then we have anarchy and chaos; if, on the other hand, the community is too strong, if community welfare and the common good supersede private rights, then we have totalitarianism and chaos. It might be argued that Plato's dialogues, from first to last, are all about community. The *Apology*, probably his first written work, is a defense of those private rights as Socrates, the defender of *psychē* and individualism, dies a martyr to that defense. Plato's last written work, the *Laws*, on the other hand, is an attempt to lay down the draconian rules by which what we would regard as a totalitarian society is meant to live and survive. The *Laws*, one of the few Platonic works in which Socrates appears not at all, leaves no doubt that in Plato's mind should any new Socrates arise, any new apologist of individualism, he would be tried for *asebeia*, blasphemy, all over again, and the result, death, would be the same, all over again.<sup>10</sup> Between these two works on community, the *Apology*, a work of Plato's youth, and the *Laws*, a work of his old age, lies the *Republic*, Plato's and the Western world's greatest philosophic work. In the *Republic* Plato attempts to meet the dilemma of the individual and the community and to make the care and the examination of the individual *psychē* possible for all citizens within a community setting.

*Some community arguments.* A glimpse of Plato's way out of that dilemma is offered in the *Apology* as Socrates turns to an argument to prove that he's not guilty of corrupting the youth of Athens. This "Socratic argument" will lead us into a parallel argument, "the community argument," that attempts to bring the individual and the community together in such a way that the dilemma is solved and the third question that we raised, above, will be answered, Can the problems of violence and peace in the twenty-first century be solved through the ways of community of Leopold or Gandhi or King or the Buddha?

Socrates begins by getting one of his accusers, Miletus, to admit to the jury of 501 citizens that no one wants to be harmed or injured. Next, he gets Miletus to agree that wicked people have a bad effect on those with whom they associate, that is, bad people harm those with whom they are in contact. But, then, Socrates concludes his argument, claiming that he's innocent of spiritually molesting the youth of the city of Athens because no one would

intentionally harm those who could then, in turn, harm oneself; this gets Socrates to the conclusion that he never *intentionally* corrupted the youth of the community, so he's not guilty of knowingly harming the young. This *Socratic argument* looks like this:

1. No one would intentionally harm oneself.
2. If one harms others then they will harm oneself.
3. Therefore, no one would intentionally harm others.<sup>11</sup>

The second premise makes sense, it seems to me, only if we accept that those others are in some manner in close association with, in community with, oneself. If I harm you then, if you are going to harm me, I must be in proximity to you, and available for you, to harm me. The argument, in other words, assumes a community of persons capable of doing wicked acts and of being retaliated against as a consequence. This *Socratic community argument* would look like this:

1. No one would intentionally harm oneself.
2. Oneself is those others, one's community (those corrupted youth of Athens, their relatives and friends, the entire angry city, for example, who could harm oneself).
3. Therefore, no one would intentionally harm those others, one's community (those who make up the community).

The nature and force of the "is" in the second premise of the Socratic community argument and in the second premises of the two community arguments that come next, need explanation. It will be our contention that the four major communities to be discussed in this book use the *is* of identity in explaining the relation between community and its members. In other words, for Leopold, Gandhi, King, and the Buddha, the relation between the community and its members is one wherein the community is the same as each member and each member is the same as the community. This organic and holistic interpretation of community together with an analysis of the *is* of identity that accompanies it will be taken up in some detail in chapter 6, below.

Which brings us to the main reason for approaching our discussion of community, violence, and peace from the point of view of Socrates and community. The Socratic community argument about those "others" and community leads to a third argument that we shall call the "community violence argument." This commu-



nity violence argument will be with us in the chapters that follow. It is an argument upon which Leopold, Gandhi, King, and the Buddha will base their solutions to the problems of violence and peace:

1. No one would intentionally do violence to oneself.
2. Oneself is one's community.
3. Therefore, no one would intentionally do violence to one's community.

While the community violence argument is meant to solve the problem of violence, another argument is necessary to solve the problem of peace. That is to say, the argument just presented shows what is necessary to reduce or eliminate violence. But what about peace, which is not merely the absence of violence? So, a corollary argument is necessary to stand beside the community violence argument. Call this second demonstration "the community peace argument":

1. Everyone would intentionally do peace to oneself.
2. Oneself is one's community.
3. Therefore, everyone would intentionally do peace to one's community.

The justification of these premises parallels the justification of the premises in the community violence argument. The language is a bit clumsy but the idea should be clear. It is not enough just to reduce violence in the twenty-first century. One would hope that making peace, that is, doing acts of love, generosity, and benefit, would also occur. And when they do, the agent believes that he or she is really doing good to himself or herself. Finally, if the cause of both problems is, indeed, unintentional, that is, done out of ignorance, then, as Socrates knew, the solution to both is going to involve attacking that ignorance through education—through enlightenment, self-transformation, or conversion. Education was, after all, what Socrates' sacred mission was about. We shall return to the community violence argument and the community peace argument throughout this book.

If our two community arguments are sound, and Leopold, Gandhi, King, and the Buddha accept the truth of the two premises, then it is imperative, if our third question is to be answered, that we inquire into just what a community is for these four men and just how one goes about defending the view that one's community is oneself—that we are the community.

## Community as a Prescription for Liberation from Suffering

If communities are established, as Aristotle suggested, for the sake of some good, then communities are also established to escape some evil. And if we now confine our investigation to purposeful communities, then we ought to be able to name both the good at which they aim as well as the evil that they seek to avoid.

A useful heuristic for dealing with such problems, causes, solutions, and ways has been nicely established in one of the world's ancient religions and we shall make use of that formula here; it is the so-called "Four Noble Truths" of Buddhism. Following his nirvana or enlightenment in 528 B.C.E., Gautama the Buddha journeyed to the city of Varanasi to preach his first sermon. In that sermon he laid out the simple formula that has defined Buddhism and guided Buddhists into the twenty-first century. The four truths to which he drew attention were the following:

1. The *problem* is that all existence is dominated by suffering.
2. The *cause* of the problem is grasping or desire.
3. The *solution* of the problem is nirvana or liberation from suffering.
4. The *way* to the solution that gets at the cause of the problem is the noble eightfold path; eight things that the follower of the Buddha can do right now to bring about that solution, ranging from the right kind of occupation, to the right intentions in action, to displaying the right kind of attention to the world, to the right kind of meditation within oneself.

It is the form of the Four Noble Truths and not their content that will serve us here. That four-stage formula can be used not only to help to define any religion, such as Buddhism, but it can outline any organized, purposeful activity set upon solving problems. And we can employ that outline on our ways of community by simply asking four questions of each: What *problem* does it attempt to solve? What is the *cause* of the problem? What is the *solution* it seeks? And what is the *way* it uses to solve the problem?<sup>12</sup>

In this book we apply this four-stage prescription, or *Rx* (i.e., "recipe") to communities as Prescriptions for Community. But before we push out our critical necks too far, suppose that we test the application of our *Rx* for Community on two well-known com-

munities and see if our four-stage formula is, indeed, a true and useful heuristic. That is to say, before turning to the four communities of Leopold, Gandhi, King, and the Buddha with which this book is principally concerned, let's have a run at two more familiar, though fictional, communities that have had an impact, political in the first case and literary and social in the second, on the twenty-first century.

## Two Communities: Plato's Republic and Aldous Huxley's World State

Aristotle had stated two necessary conditions for community and those conditions, together with our view that communities entail some kind of commonality or sharing aimed at problem-solving, should give us a ground from which to go community-hunting with our four-stage Rx for Community. First, Aristotle assumed, communities are intentionally established, that is, they don't just grow spontaneously or haphazardly, and, second, they are established in order to solve a problem by creating the highest good, namely, happiness or *eudaimonia*. "Happiness" is a grandly ambiguous word and the kind of community one establishes to generate happiness (and Aristotle himself attempted in his *Politics* to describe one such happiness-generating society) varies and depends on what one views happiness to be.

In what follows, we briefly explore two such communities established with two entirely different notions of happiness in mind, self-realization in the first and pure pleasure in the second. But while different, each community believed that it could bring about the greatest good for all of its citizens and thereby solve the problems of violence and peace. Following this exploration we will conclude by presenting a comparison of our two utopias together with an analysis of several problems and puzzles that would appear to arise concerning them. The first community is that of Plato of Athens (427–347 B.C.E.) and the second that of Aldous Huxley (1894–1963).

### Plato of Athens: The Community of Republic

Plato set standards in the search for both the meaning of life and the philosophy of community that later generations of

philosophers in the West have attempted to follow. In a very real sense Plato invented both "philosophy" and "community" and he took his inventions very seriously, indeed. He says in his greatest work, the *Republic*, "For no light matter is at stake; the question concerns the very manner in which human life is to be lived."<sup>13</sup> Plato anticipated thereby the sentiment of his own pupil, Aristotle, who asked the two practical questions that philosophers have been pursuing ever since: What is the best and most worthwhile *life* that a human being can live? and What is the best and most worthwhile *community* that will make that life possible?

### *Plato's Life*

Plato was born in Athens in 427 B.C.E. His real name was "Aristocles" but a nickname, "Platon," which in Greek means "wide" or "broad," was given to him perhaps because of his thick-set, stocky body, which helped to make him a champion wrestler. Plato's family was from the aristocratic ranks, but it strongly supported the administration of a free and democratic Athens. Plato counted among his father's ancestors one of the last kings of Athens and among his mother's ancestors was Solon, the great lawgiver. Plato grew up during the devastating Peloponnesian War and was only twenty-three when it finally ended with totalitarian Sparta triumphant over democratic Athens. As a young man he had fought in three battles of that war and had won a medal for bravery. He excelled in his studies in music, mathematics, rhetoric, and poetry. He wrestled at the Isthmian games and wrote love poetry, tragic verse, and epigrams. Plato, though acquainted with Socrates all of his life, may have been only twenty when he first heard Socrates speak in public. One source says that the experience so moved him that he went home, burned a tragedy that he had just written, and renounced poetry, wrestling, and women in order to follow this odd but compelling personality.

Plato had cherished the hope for a political career, as he tells us in one of his many surviving letters, but gave up politics when he saw what horrors the rule of the notorious Thirty Oligarchs brought to defeated Athens when the pro-Spartans seized power in 404 B.C.E. He was especially horrified when he saw later how the anti-Spartan democracy dealt with his beloved Socrates three years after they recovered power. Athenian politics was no place for a political moderate, a well-educated and promisingly brilliant

philosopher. Following the tragic execution of his friend and teacher in 399 B.C.E., Plato fled Athens and spent twelve years traveling the violence-ravaged Mediterranean world.

### The Academy: An Educational Community

Plato, on his return to Athens in 387, proceeded to establish a school, the Academy, one mile outside the walls of Athens in a place consecrated to a mythological hero, Academus. The place consisted of a grove of trees, gardens, a gymnasium, and several other buildings. It was here in this sacred plot that Plato gathered about him the young men who were to form a religious community, the nucleus of one of the first universities of its kind in the ancient world. The scholars ate their meals in common, and the meals were occasions for long drinking, reading, and talking sessions, "symposia,"<sup>14</sup> as they were called.

Outsiders were welcome to the public lectures and people from all over the civilized world came in large numbers, especially for lectures with catchy titles such as "On the Good," "On the Soul," "On the Best Life," and so on. Having come, they expected, we are told, to hear some wonderful sort of prescription for human happiness and the best life; but, as often as not, they went away disappointed when the master's lectures were all about mathematics and astronomy, Plato's adamant prerequisites to virtue and happiness. Over the portals of the Academy, carved in the face of the rock, was the motto by which this community, established on hallowed ground and dedicated to the divine Muses of learning, was guided: *Let No One Ignorant of Geometry Enter Here*, a reference to the order and harmony and reality of the numbers and ideal figures that Plato, like his Pythagorean predecessors, revered.

Besides lectures on the good, mathematics, and astronomy, he also taught political theory. The principal aim of the education at the Academy, the sole reason for its existence, was to produce those men and women who would become philosophers, statesmen, counselors, rulers, and even kings, in the communities of the world outside the school's sacred confines. The pupils of Plato, we are told by Plutarch and others, traveled far and wide as political troubleshooters, helping colonies, cities, and towns revise their constitutions, in order to better govern their subjects, citizens, and colonies by adopting milder forms of government with more agreeable and enforceable laws. It is this interest in, concern for, and

expertise about community that makes Plato more than capable to speak to the questions we have set for him below. The Academy became a school of political science and diplomacy for the entire Mediterranean world for several hundred years and remained an educational force in the West until its abrupt closing by the Christian emperor of Rome, Justinian, in 529 C.E. The memory of Plato's Academy stands, even today, as a model of educational inspiration and reform, a bright intellectual light that the passage of the years has neither extinguished nor dimmed.<sup>15</sup>

Plato died in 347 B.C.E. and, following a funeral procession at the Academy, was buried within its sacred grounds. The entire city mourned the death of the greatest philosopher and Athenian since Socrates.

### *The Republic: A Spiritual Community*

The *Republic* consists of an opening chapter in the style of a Socratic dialogue and nine remaining chapters in the style of Plato's middle period. The subject throughout the *Republic* is *dikē* (pronounced "dee-kay"), "justice," which refers to the best and most worthwhile life that a human being, or a community, can live.<sup>16</sup>

*What is justice?* The *Republic* is undoubtedly Plato's finest and, except for the *Laws*, his longest work. In it Plato, through his hero Socrates, undertakes to describe the ideal community in which every human being can be happy. It is the first and in many ways the most finely described Western utopia that we have, setting a model that later utopia builders, from Aristotle to St. Aurelius Augustine, to François Rabelais, Jonathan Swift, Karl Marx, Edward Bellamy, and Aldous Huxley, will try to match and surpass.

The *Republic* is a dramatic dialogue set sometime around the year 421 B.C.E. The action takes place at the house of Polemarchus in the Piraeus, the port of Athens and six miles from the city. In addition to Socrates, Plato's two brothers are present along with a company of young, and several older, men. The subject of discussion quickly turns to *dikē*, justice, that is, the best life. The question quickly becomes, What is the best life, happiness, for the soul, *psychē*? and, What is the best life, happiness, for the community? The first book of the *Republic* is a dialogue in the grand old Socratic tradition of Plato's early works, hunting for the meanings of concepts through the analysis of suggested definitions. Before the first book concludes, some seven definitions of *dikē* have been offered and rejected. But what is needed, Socrates has discovered, is a

lengthier and larger examination of justice in the context of a community before it can be determined what justice in the soul is all about.

*Justice in the large: Utopia as community.* So Socrates suggests that in order to see what justice in the small, or in the individual soul, is like, it might be better, first, to see justice magnified. And therefore he recommends looking at justice in the large in the only external place where it can exist, that is, in a community. Now begins Plato's construction of an ideal community, a community which is happy, where all may seek the best and most worthwhile life possible. Here is Plato's *utopia*, a best place (*eu-topos*) that is no place (*ou-topos*).

Plato starts by focusing on the three classes of citizens who will compose the community: (1) the philosopher-kings or rulers, (2) the warriors or defenders, and (3) the craftsmen, farmers, or producers. The warriors are the guardians of the community, and, like the rulers, they possess no private property, wealth, or goods, lest they become corrupted by bribery and greed; they eat in a common mess, share and share alike, live together like campaigning soldiers, and handle no gold or silver. These guardians are the helpers of the rulers and, like the rulers, they are chosen for their vocation according to their inborn, or hereditary, natures. Plato's community is based on the particular natural talents, abilities, and capacities inborn in every person.

*Censorship and eugenics.* To begin with, everyone over the age of ten must be excluded from the community. Education must start with children only, for adults are already corrupted and uneducable and cannot be trained for utopia. The children of the community will develop and be educated under the watchful eyes of Plato's philosopher-statesmen. Strict censorship exists and even Homer is prohibited lest his immoral tales of the gods corrupt the young. Plato would have been shocked by our sentimental and nostalgic movies about religion, such as *The Ten Commandments*, *The Robe*, *The Silver Chalice*, and *David and Bathsheba*, as well as by the mawkish Saturday and Sunday school stories of biblical heroes. Music is censored and only patriotic military anthems are allowed, not sentimental and romantic melodies; Plato would have been repelled were he living now upon hearing our modern maudlin love songs, as well as by our country-western, rock jazz, and acid rock. John Philip Sousa would probably have pleased him, however. Plato's entire community is to be rigidly controlled in its intellec-

tual, emotional, and religious life in the uncontrovertible belief that what you are exposed to today will help to determine the kind of person that you will become tomorrow. Everything that is done is done to ensure that the young and growing citizens will be surrounded only by the best, at least "the best" as determined by the wisest minds available, at least "the wisest minds" as determined by Plato. The society is a totalitarian community from rulers to farmers, with the sole aim of making all of the citizens happy by producing the best and most worthwhile life for all.

The citizens are trained to accept the class that their inherited soul natures determine they belong in. Through an elaborate "golden lie," the citizens are induced to believe that it is God's will that they remain in the class that they are naturally suited for, but are not necessarily born into, and that that class is the best.<sup>17</sup> Socrates, Plato's voice in the *Republic*, states: "It seems likely that our rulers will have to make considerable use of falsehood and deception for the benefit of their subjects."<sup>18</sup> But the lies are *golden* lies because they are harmless and ultimately for the best, just as our lies to our children are profitable and for the best regarding Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, and so on. Community security and social stability are always the ultimate aim.

Eugenics is practiced among the rulers and the guardians since the best will mate only with the best "like race horses," Plato states. Abnormal infants are allowed to die by the chief method of birth control known throughout the ancient world, exposure. But women are treated on an equal level with men, sharing the direction and defense of the community wherever their natural vocations lead them. While men's and women's natures differ, Plato says, it is not the kind of difference that need make a difference to this community.

*The organic theory of the community.* The utopia that Plato envisions is an organic community in which the citizens are like the cells in a body with the three classes forming the body's major parts.<sup>19</sup> The ruling class is the head, the defenders are the arms, and the farmers-workers-artisans are the loins, stomach, and legs. All the parts are necessary to the happy functioning of the whole. No one part is more important than another, and all are equally important.

Cicero, the Stoic Roman statesman of the first century B.C.E., tells a story that best illustrates this organic theory of the community. It seems that a violent dispute broke out in the body between the head and the arms as to who was the most important. The head



maintained that without it, the body would never find food and would wither and die. The arms maintained that the head was wrong for without arms the food would never be gathered and the body would surely perish. And on they shouted and raged at one another until all their wrangling woke up the stomach who sleepily asked what all the racket was about. On being told, the stomach then lazily stated that as far as truth was concerned, it, the stomach, was the most important member of the body. Whereupon the arms and head laughed at the impertinence of this lazy, good-for-nothing interloper in their fight. So the stomach promptly stopped accepting the food that the head found and the arms gathered. The body, after several weeks, began to wither and was only saved from death when the head and arms together acknowledged the equal importance of the stomach to the total health of the body.

That is the very point that Plato is making in his description of his community: all the parts are important to the total well-being of the whole; if each part is happy and doing its assigned task, then the whole community will be happy. Thus the need for strict central control of the classes by censorship and the golden lies: justice (well-being) in the parts yields justice in the whole. That is to say, there will be justice in the community when the ruler is ruling, the defender is defending, and the farmer-artisan-businessman is doing what the state needs, that is, producing and exchanging goods.

But how does one know to which class one belongs? And what does it mean to be happy in following one's vocation, one's calling? And who calls one to one's task or vocation, anyway? The answers to these questions, as we shall see, are, first, that through education one discovers one's appropriate class; to be happy means to have the three parts of one's own soul working in harmony and balance just as happiness in the community means that the three classes of the community are working in harmony and balance; and, finally, each person calls himself or herself to the class and the vocation that one enjoys in the community, that is, your soul calls you and tells you who you are. These questions and answers will be explored as we turn finally to Plato's philosophy of soul-realization in his *Republic*.

*Justice in the small: Self-realization.* There are four assumptions that underlie Plato's description of his ideal community that, if accepted, would probably make that community work, that is, produce the best and most worthwhile life for all of its citizens.

Taken together, these assumptions constitute Plato's description of justice in the small and his theory of self-realization as the way to that best and most worthwhile life of the soul:

*1. Each person has one of three distinct soul natures.*

Plato assumed that every human being has a soul, that it has three parts, and that these parts determine the kind of person one will be. The theory of the tripartite soul is essential to both justice in the community, "justice in the large," and justice in the soul, "justice in the small," that Plato is advancing in the *Republic*. The three parts of the soul are: (1) the rational or reasoning part, which predominates in the naturally contemplative and deliberative person; (2) the spirited or active part, which predominates in the naturally pugnacious or aggressive person; and finally (3) the emotional or acquisitive part of the soul, which predominates in the naturally wealth-directed, material-object-loving person. The kind of person that you are essentially, whether a thinking, willing, or feeling person, depends on which of the three parts of your soul is dominant.

*2. A person can live the best and most worthwhile life, that is, be happiest, when he or she is living according to his or her own soul nature.*

Plato assumed that the soul nature that one had was the key to happiness. There are vocations, in other words, to match soul natures. Part of the task of Plato's educational system, as we shall see, is to match souls to jobs. Plato joins three specific vocations to the three predominant soul natures in the following manner: Corresponding to the soul that is predominantly rational and contemplative is the vocational class of the philosopher-kings whose task it is, like the head of the human body, to lead and direct the community. Corresponding to the soul that is predominantly aggressive and assertive is the vocational class of the guardians and warriors whose task it is, like the arms of the body, to protect and defend the community. Corresponding to the soul that is predominantly appetitive and acquisitive is the vocational class of the artisans, merchants, and farmers, whose task it is, like the stomach and intestines, to nourish the community.

Socrates points out to Glaucon, Plato's brother, that justice in the community and harmony and happiness in the soul depend, in the end, on the same thing, namely, each person, and thereby each class doing what they are best fitted by their own nature to do: The community is the soul writ large:

SOCRATES: Through these waters, then, said I, we have with difficulty made our way and we are fairly agreed that the same kinds equal in number are to be found in the community and in the soul of each one of us.

GLAUCON: That is so.

SOCRATES: Then does not the necessity of our former postulate immediately follow, that as and whereby the community was wise, so and thereby is the individual wise?

GLAUCON: Surely.

And in the same way as the community and the individual are wise, so also will it be with respect to bravery and self-control in the community for the two remaining classes and in the individual for the two remaining parts of the soul. Further, the community will be just in exactly the same way as the individual is just: "that the community was just by reason of each of the three classes found in it fulfilling its own function."<sup>20</sup> From the parallel with the community, then, the soul will be just and happy when all of its parts are performing their proper functions and working in harmony with one another.

### 3. A person's soul nature can be empirically discovered.

Plato claimed that education in the community could be employed to determine which citizens were by nature best suited to handle the three main tasks of the society: governing it, defending it, and nourishing it. There is to be every opportunity for the demotion of the unworthy and the promotion of the worthy. The educational plan that he developed in the *Republic* and later in his *Laws* worked somewhat as follows:

#### *Ages Educational Activity*

- 1-5 The children of the workers are kept at home and the children of the rulers and soldiers are raised together in the state nurseries.
- 5-15 Reading, writing, music, the arts and gymnastics are taught with the teachers keeping a watchful eye in order to see what natures or abilities predominate in their charges. *The working class, the common people, begin to graduate.*
- 15-17 Mathematics is taught and examinations, verbal, written and physical, are given as future *farmers, craftsmen, and merchants continue to graduate.*

- 18–20 Military and physical training is taught and more tests are given as future *warriors graduate*.
- 20–30 Higher mathematics instruction and tests are given as the *lower ranks of philosopher-kings graduate*.
- 30–35 Pure reasoning is taught and higher training in moral reasoning is given.
- 35–50 More advanced practical instruction in running the state is given and the *higher ranks of philosopher-kings emerge*.

Socrates describes Plato's aristocratic (literally, "the rule of the best") vision of a community directed by men and women with the highest practical expertise backed by the purest theoretical knowledge:

Unless, said I, either philosophers become kings in our communities or those whom we now call kings and rulers take to the pursuit of philosophy seriously and adequately, and there is a conjunction of these two things, political power and philosophical intelligence, while the motley horde of the natures who at present pursue either apart from the other are compulsorily excluded, there can be no cessation of troubles, dear Glaucon, for our communities, nor, I fancy, for the human race either.<sup>21</sup>

In his famous allegory of the cave, Plato offers one of the most memorable similes of the ultimate spiritual nature of his educational process. Our souls, he says, are like chained miserable prisoners in a gloomy and enshadowed cave. Unable to move about or to see beyond the shadows directly in front of us, we live in ignorance of our soul's real nature and of our true surroundings. But then one of the souls is relieved of his shackles and forced to stand up, he turns about and sees the causes of the shadows and his bondage. Now begins the soul's ascent to knowledge and enlightenment as it is dragged (by the teacher) up the steep and darkened incline to the brightened mouth of the cave. There the soul suddenly beholds a world of reality and beauty lighted by the most dazzling and resplendent Being of all symbolized by the sun. Gradually raising his eyes, the prisoner beholds the truth, beauty, and goodness of this new world and he is transformed by the experience. If the prisoner, now filled with the vision of his soul's ascent to Reality, which is actually a descent into itself, should return to the unhappy community within the cave and tell his wretched com-